

# Strategy Research Project

## National Strategic Communication: Back to the Future

by

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United States Army War College  
Class of 2013

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## **Abstract**

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America is engaged in a struggle for ideas with those who believe in radical Salafi jihadist ideology. Both ideologies have vastly different visions of the future. Strategic communication is the term widely used to describe American outreach to the globe and to Muslim communities in particular. Since 9/11 American efforts in strategic communication have been highly criticized, much maligned, and perceived as genuinely ineffective. This paper examines current U.S. national strategic communication organization and policy to determine if it is aligned properly to compete and win the struggle for ideas. Historically, America has been highly successful in national strategic communication and information operations. The paper explores American national strategic communication organizations during WWI, WWII, and the Cold War, finding that there were six elements that contributed to successful national strategic communication efforts. When comparing these elements to current national strategic communication organization and policy the conclusion is that current organization and policy does not possess the elements that historically have led to past successful strategic communication endeavors.





## **National Strategic Communication: Back to the Future**

When we half educate everything in trousers our Army will be a beautifully unreliable machine...it will think too much and do too little.

—Rudyard Kipling, *Guns of the Fore and Aft*

At the close of World War Two, a highly observant Foreign Service officer, working in Moscow, wrote a telegram to his superiors in Washington. George Kennan's "Long Telegram" outlined the idea of containment that would drive U.S. strategy toward the U.S.S.R for the next six decades.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently Kennan became recognized as a preeminent American diplomat, statesman, and scholar. Although he was haunted by the word "containment" over the next fifty plus years, his strategic framework, laid out in both the "Long Telegram" and subsequent article "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," became the intellectual foundation for the operationalized version of containment captured in the April, 1950 National Security Document-68 (NSC 68).<sup>2</sup> NSC 68 outlined the nature of the conflict with the U.S.S.R and provided strategic direction and options for America's leaders using the entire spectrum of the nation's instruments of power.<sup>3</sup> These national instruments include Diplomatic, Informational/Psychological, Military, and Economic (DIME). Although there were content disagreements between Kennan and Paul Nitze, the author of NSC 68, their writings provided the Truman administration with a working framework of policy options and the beginnings of a national or grand strategy to deal with the problem that communist ideology and Soviet Russia presented.

George Kennan realized in 1946 that this "war" against communist ideology was going to be fought on the battlefield of ideas when he wrote in the conclusion of the Long Telegram,

Much depends on the health and vigor of our own society. World communism is like a malignant parasite, which feeds only on diseased tissue. This is the point at which domestic and foreign policies meet(sic). Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqués.<sup>4</sup>

Since 9/11 many believe that the United States is engaged in a new war of ideology, a global struggle for people's beliefs. On one side is a belief in the ideas of Western civilization where separation of church and state and principles of free will, freedom of choice, freedom to worship, and freedom of speech are valued and safeguarded. It is an ideology based on inalienable rights that include the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and one in which no man needs to live by another man's leave.

Opposing this view, from the Western perspective, is a belief in violent extremism tied to the fringes of Islam. Radical Salafi jihadist ideology is the wellspring from which the Al Qaida and associated movements (AQAM), and similar bodies like the Moslem Brotherhood grow. This ideology closely resembles Wahhabism and shares the same vision of the future where the strategic objective is a global Caliphate ruled by sharia law.<sup>5</sup> The constitutional charter of Al Qaida lists as its primary goal "the Victory of the mighty religion of Allah, the establishment of an Islamic Regime and the restoration of the Islamic Caliphate, God Willing."<sup>6</sup> Although all Salafi ideology shares the same vision of the future, AQAM differs from the Moslem Brotherhood and Wahhabism in the belief that violent jihad is necessary and is perceived as another "pillar of Islam."<sup>7</sup>

Strategically, America and the West in general face radical elements of Islam that agree on the ends (global Caliphate) but who disagree on the ways and means to achieve their objective. Some use the sword like AQAM and others the voting booth like

the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, while others use the cover of friendly governments such as the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia to spread their ideology. The unifying element is that these radical movements use modern means of communication to recruit new members, gain sanctuary, and increase strength in their unending search for legitimacy.

To win this competition and defeat radical Salafi jihadist ideology the United States must proactively engage in the “war of Ideas.” Almost 12 years after the horrific events of 9/11 many still believe the U.S. is not aggressively fighting this battle of the mind.<sup>8</sup> If one considers current global opinion polls and observes current events, America is doing remarkably poorly in the struggle over ideology even though the adversary is known. The 9/11 report defined this rivalry as:

Our enemy is twofold; Al Qaeda, a stateless network of terrorists that struck us on 9/11; and a radical ideological movement in the Islamic world, inspired in part by Al Qaeda, which has spawned terrorist groups and violence across the globe. The first enemy is weakened, but continues to pose a grave threat. The second enemy is gathering, and will menace Americans and American interests long after Osama bin Laden and his cohorts are killed or captured. Thus our strategy must match our means twofold: dismantling the Al Qaeda network and prevailing in the longer term over the ideology that gives rise to Islamist terrorism.<sup>9</sup>

In government and military circles, "strategic communication" has been used to describe United States communication efforts and outreach to the globe and to Muslim communities in particular. This paper will examine the United States national strategic communication structure and determine if the organization and policy are aligned properly to win the war of ideas against violent extremism. To achieve this the paper will first examine the background of American strategic communication to explore and identify any lessons from experience to determine if they apply to the current environment. The paper will progress to map today's national framework for strategic communication to determine if the organization, policy, and supporting strategy is

effective. Finally the paper will conclude with organizational and policy recommendations.

### Strategy and Strategic Communication

The U.S. Army War College defines strategic art as "The skillful formulation, coordination, and application of ends (objectives), ways (courses of action), and means (supporting resources) to promote and defend the national interests."<sup>10</sup> Balancing the ends, ways, and means is further complicated by the impact of Clausewitz's "Remarkable Trinity" and the impact of the interaction between the government, the military, and the people on the process.<sup>11</sup> National strategy, the identification of national objectives (ends) and the subsequent balancing of the nation's instruments of power—diplomatic, informational (psychological), military, and economic to achieve the stated ends is the nexus of strategy. But where does strategic communication fit?

There is much debate in academic and government circles on the meaning of strategic communication. Some believe it is one of the means, a resource, and a tool that is akin to public diplomacy. Others believe strategic communication is a process – a "way" to guide other resources (means), such as public diplomacy, information operations, public affairs, and psychological operations, to achieve a stated strategic objective. Unfortunately, the definition of strategic communication remains elusive.

Adm. James G Stavridis, the current SACEUR and former Geographic Combat Commander (GCC) at Southern Command, defines strategic communication as "the ability to provide audiences with truthful and timely information that will influence them to support the objectives of the communicator."<sup>12</sup> The Department of Defense (DOD) defines strategic communication in Joint Publication (JP) 1-02 as "focused United States government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create,

strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power."<sup>13</sup>

In an attempt to clarify the confusion, the White House defined strategic communication in the 2009 National Strategic Communication Framework as, “(a) the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operation professionals.”<sup>14</sup> The framework further defined synchronization and deliberate communication and engagement as follows:

Synchronization: coordinating words and deeds, including the active consideration of how our actions and policies will be interpreted by public audiences as an organic part of decision-making, it's an important task. This understanding of strategic communication is driven by recognition that what we do is often more important than what we say because actions have communicative value and send messages. Achieving strategic communication, in this sense is a shared responsibility. It requires fostering a culture of communication that use this type of synchronization and encourages decision-makers to take the communicative value of actions into account during their decision-making. The most senior levels of government must advocate and implement a culture of communication that is reinforced through mechanisms and processes.<sup>15</sup>

Deliberate communication and engagement: the United States government has a wide range of programs and activities deliberately focused on understanding, engaging, informing, influencing, and communicating with people through public affairs, public diplomacy, information operations and other efforts.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to strategic communication, other terms need to be addressed, as many in the strategic communication community use them in support of or analogous with strategic communication. The U.S. government defines public diplomacy as

actions that “support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and Government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world.”<sup>17</sup> This falls into the realm of the Department of State (DOS) and consists of people-to-people outreach and engagement, whereas traditional diplomacy concerns itself with government-to-government engagement.

According to Michael Waller, “political warfare” is a term desperately needed back in the government arsenal, as it is “the employment of aggressive and even coercive political means to achieve objectives, ranging from winning a tough campaign for public office to meeting military objectives through non-military means.”<sup>18</sup> The military executes information operations: “The integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own, also called IO.”<sup>19</sup> IO is closely related to psychological operations (PSYOP), which no longer appears in the November 2012 JP 1-02 and has been replaced by Military Information Support Operations that are “planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of military information support operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator’s objectives. Also called MISO.”<sup>20</sup>

In an attempt to clarify the issue of “strategic communication (SC)” inside the Department of Defense (DOD), a 28 November 2012 memorandum states: “We avoid using the term SC to avoid causing confusion. The more accurate terminology, which will be used in the future Joint Publications, is communication synchronization.”<sup>21</sup> From the DOD perspective strategic communication is a national level process where DOD supports the achievement of national SC ends through the execution of “communication synchronization.” Together these terms form the backbone of U.S. strategic communication and are utilized globally to communicate and tell “America’s story” to the world through words and deeds.

### Background

Current strategic communication and the confusion it creates is a relatively new phenomenon. Until recently strategies to inform, influence, and persuade, were called propaganda that was driven by psychological operations. Over time both propaganda and psychological operations developed negative connotations. This fact coupled with an explosion of communication studies in academia and an environment of political correctness has led to a series of euphemisms for propaganda and psychological operations that have confused what was once, not so long ago, relatively clear and simple. According to Phillip Taylor, in his thought provoking book “Munitions of the Mind,” propaganda is “defined as a deliberate attempt to persuade people, by any available media, to think and then behave in a manner desired by the source, it is really a means to an end.”<sup>22</sup> Propaganda is neutral and does not possess any inherent good or evil whereas that determination depends on the message and the belief of the receiver.<sup>23</sup> Euphemisms for propaganda such as psychological warfare, political warfare, information operations, influence operations, cultural warfare and diplomacy,

public diplomacy, and strategic communication have all muddied the once relatively clear waters of influence and persuasion. Meanwhile adversaries, who are not encumbered by ambiguities wage successful psychological and political warfare using propaganda to influence their audience, gain support, widen sanctuary, increase strength, and ultimately gain legitimacy to realize their strategic ends.

Historically, democracies in general and the United States in particular do not embrace information operations and have only truly nationalized the process during perceived times of existential threat. As Philip Seib remarks “neither the people of the United States nor their Congress have ever been truly comfortable with the government’s role in communication at home or abroad.”<sup>24</sup> Although the United States might not be “comfortable with influence” that does not mean that the United States was never good at it. While critics rightfully blast current government efforts to formulate and execute a strategic communication strategy, a cursory study of recent history will confirm that the United States were once masters of strategic communication and with some effort and will, could be again.

Most will agree that the United States, since its inception, used strategic communication to support national objectives. Strategic communication, political war, and psychological operations were used to great effect to influence friends and enemies alike. The U.S. used it to gain French trust and support during the American Revolution and to strengthen the will of the people and weaken the Confederacy during the Civil War.<sup>25</sup> It was not until the “Great Wars” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, starting during WWI and ending with the Cold War and the fall of the U.S.S.R that the U.S. truly nationalized the Information instrument of power.



Three Federal information agencies were born, lived, and died between 1917 and 1999: (a) The Committee for Public Information (CPI), 1917-1919, (b) the Office for War Information (OWI), 1942-1945, and (c) the most enduring, the United States Information Agency (USIA), 1953-1999. All were designed to use information in support of national objectives (ends) by informing domestic populations to create, and maintain popular will, strengthen allies and partners, and use influence to weaken adversaries. In comparing the organizations, there are six fundamental elements that enabled the success of the separate organizations across the years and many of these six illuminate current U.S. issues with strategic communication.

The first is a belief that the nation is facing a real or perceived existential threat and that the nature of the threat is such that it will take the sacrifice and endeavor of the entire population to defeat it. The second element is the need to clarify the ends of the information effort, to what national objective is the information effort being directed and to what end is it to achieve. The third is the presence of an interagency strategy planning board or committee led by the executive and consisting of department heads that can visualize achievable ends, synchronize national instruments of power, develop policy and supporting national strategy, and finally operationalize the strategy and track its execution throughout the various government agencies and efforts. The fourth is the crucial role that the President plays as the primary driver and leader of strategic communication and public diplomacy. The President must realize the threat and communicate it to the population. Historically, presidents that led information operations and strategic communication at the executive level reinforced public will externally, while internally prevented inter-department bureaucratic push back, established and

maintained a sense of urgency, and supported information efforts across the instruments of power. The fifth is the designation of a cabinet level leader of the information agency or effort who has a relationship and the full faith and confidence of the President and is an equal partner with other Department Secretaries. This individual should be known and respected by the American people at large and Congress, if possible, and possess a media or journalist background so that the domestic population trusts the information they receive. The sixth (and most important) is the national and cultural self-confidence that naturally develops from the firm belief in American exceptionalism coupled with the conviction that U.S. ideology is superior to that of the adversaries. The operating environment where strategic communication resides has stayed relatively stable across the years, Congressional and political partisanship, and individual and media distrust of government provided information have, rightfully, added friction to the process and have acted as a counterweight to government information activities.

#### Committee for Public Information

During World War I a progressive President Woodrow Wilson launched America's first attempt at making information a true instrument of national power. Wilson realized, as did most heads of state, that to attain victory in "total war" America needed strong and sustained public will coupled with domestic support, strong international allies, and a psychologically weakened adversary. On April 13<sup>th</sup> 1917, seven days after the U.S. entered the war; President Wilson signed Executive Order 2594 establishing the Committee for Public Information (CPI) directed by journalist and ardent supporter George Creel.<sup>26</sup> The Committee functioned throughout the war and was abolished by executive order 3154 on August 21, 1919.<sup>27</sup>

The first lessons of the CPI were the astounding speed by which the organization was established, the rapidity by which it grew, and the sheer amount of work it completed in the short 28-month timeframe it existed. The CPI consisted of 19 divisions in the domestic branch and 3 divisions in the foreign branch. Describing the growth and nature of the organization, George Creel wrote that:

Under the pressure of tremendous necessities an organization grew that not only reached deep into every American community, but that carried to every corner of the civilized globe the full message of America's idealism, unselfishness, and indomitable purpose. We fought prejudice, indifference, and disaffection at home and we fought ignorance and falsehood abroad. We did not call it propaganda, for that word, in German hands, had come to be associated with deceit and corruption. Our effort was educational and informative throughout, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of fact.<sup>28</sup>

The Creel Committee was innovative and imaginative, combining never before seen, private, and public partnership utilizing public relations, advertising executives, college professors, journalists and churning out thousands of stories, booklets, facts, bulletins, and posters. Partnership with the motion picture industry started during the war and famous artists such as Montgomery Flagg were enlisted for the cause.<sup>29</sup> One of the most innovative programs was the Department of Four-Minute Men. In an age without radio, rudimentary communication structure, and undeveloped roadways, the division grew from 2,500 speakers in July 1917, to almost 75,000 by the end of the war. The Department delivered 4-minute speeches in support of the war in every state, including locations as isolated as Guam and Samoa. It is estimated that in the short 28-month time span the CPI existed almost four million speeches were given to upwards of 300 million people.<sup>30</sup> The CPI is a testimony to the power of will, the ability to transform intent into action, and the innovative spirit of Americans.

For the first time, information as an instrument of power had a voice at the executive level, and President Wilson was heavily supportive of the programs executed under the CPI. George Creel was a cabinet level advisor and as such, his support from the President cut through much interagency and governmental red tape and stonewalling. The CPI Executive Board consisted of the Secretary of State, The Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, and the civilian chair George Creel.<sup>31</sup> Although not a strategy planning committee per se, it was the first attempt to synchronize instruments of power outside of the War Department.<sup>32</sup>

Political partisanship, as prevalent in 1917 as it is today, played its part. In the words of George Creel describing President Wilson, "Considering the fact that he has had to work through Congress, torn by its partisan, sectional, and personal prejudices, it is amazing indeed to mark this man's record of tremendous achievement."<sup>33</sup>

CPI was critical in achieving the war ends set forth by President Wilson. For the first time in American history, Information became a true instrument of national power; the beginning of strategic communication had arrived. Philip Taylor suggests there were multiple lessons learned concerning propaganda (strategic communication) during and after World War I. First was that emotionally laden "hate propaganda" such as the film "Once a Hun, Always a Hun" and various other methods of "making Germany pay" were seized upon by the American public, leading to, widespread anti-German prejudice in the U.S.<sup>34</sup> Second was the idea that national policy and propaganda must go hand-in-hand to be effective. This was clearly demonstrated after President Wilson delivered his 14 Point Speech in January 1918, where self-determination was one of the major themes. Although self-determination and the League of Nations were the main points to

the speech, the reality of the Versailles Treaty and the failure of Congress to ratify the treaty seriously damaged international trust and confidence in the United States.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, the CPI demonstrated the strength of a “mobilized America.” The CPI can be said to have been a “nationalizing agent” as it unashamedly promoted loyalty and unity while generating and sustaining popular will and support. It rallied the people around a noble cause - the defeat of Germany - and exported American values of democracy to the world. By 1919 the CPI had unified what was only two years before a widely disparate and disunited America.<sup>36</sup>

Wilson and Creel successfully integrated information into the nation’s instruments of power. They identified and sold America on an existential threat and unified the population. President Wilson was a committed and engaged executive; George Creel was a cabinet level advisor who had the voice and support of the President. The CPI ultimately achieved the stated strategic ends.

Following the war, allegations arose about British propaganda aimed at the United States. There were also Congressional oversight hearings concerning the nature of American propaganda during the war and the perception of CPI censorship during the debate over the Versailles Treaty. The CPI was unceremoniously closed by Executive Order in 1919. Ultimately, the “greatest adventure in advertising” successfully sold the war but failed to adequately sell the peace.<sup>37</sup>

#### Office of War Information

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who served as Secretary of the Navy during World War I, was distrustful of federal information efforts at that time. According to Allen Winkler, President Roosevelt, unlike President Wilson “remembered the CPI and World War I and hesitated to open the way to similar extremes. Roosevelt’s

reservations ensured that the first attempts to establish any propaganda network would be halting and hesitant."<sup>38</sup>

In a curious resemblance to today's evolution of the strategic communication establishment, the government experimented with a series of organizations, workgroups, and committees prior to the establishment of the Office of War Information. Initially, the Office of Government Repeals was established in 1939 "to provide the public with information about the activities of various government agencies."<sup>39</sup> This organization was first succeeded by the Division of Information of the Office of Emergency Management, then the Office of Civilian Defense, and finally the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF).<sup>40</sup> OFF was charged with "facilitating a widespread and accurate understanding of the status and progress of the national defense effort... and activities of the government."<sup>41</sup> All of these organizations failed due to their inability to influence other government agencies, especially the War Department. Their failure resulted from a lack of executive support and political power.

By 1942, the United States information organization and operations were a fiasco. Uncoordinated agencies, unsupported by a communication strategy, competed with an unwilling War Department and other service branches to provide information to the American people and an international audience. In response, President Roosevelt established the Office For War Information (OWI) by Executive Order on 13 Jan 1942 to:

Perform the following functions and duties: (a) Formulate and carry out, through the use of press, radio, motion picture, and other facilities, information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the Government. (b) Coordinate the war informational activities of all

Federal departments and agencies for the purpose of assuring an accurate and consistent flow of war information to the public and the world at large.<sup>42</sup>

Like the CPI the OWI was divided into a domestic and foreign branch (Foreign Information Service) and was designed to sell America to our allies and weaken the Axis powers. To lead this office, Roosevelt selected journalist and well-known CBS radio commentator Elmer Davis. Davis was highly respected, and more importantly trusted by the American public. One journalist described him as “solid American to the core...the sort of American that belongs to the heart of the country.”<sup>43</sup>

The development of OWI reflected in many ways the current debate about the structure and purpose of national strategic communication. Even faced with the existential threat posed by Germany and Japan, the nation was divided between two camps on the need for a government information service. The first camp, representing the majority, believed that it was necessary to engage popular domestic support in order to win the war, while members of the other camp were concerned that the pursuit of that unity might compromise the values of the country. Elmer Davis, a lifelong writer and journalist, was not immune to the struggle but ultimately believed that “this is a people’s war, and the people are entitled to know as much as possible about it.”<sup>44</sup>

Because Elmer Davis was trusted and known to the American public, Americans at large felt comfortable receiving information from this dependable source. Still, the OWI came under enormous pressure from both external and internal forces. Unlike his WWI counterpart, George Creel, Davis was not a true member of Roosevelt’s cabinet. Davis worked for a President who was notorious for playing agencies and individuals against each other. Davis was continuously struggling with the War Department, as well as the Navy and State Departments for support and information.<sup>45</sup> George Creel wrote a

letter to Davis stating his concerns that Davis did not have any influence over the War Department or the other services. Creel continued that when he had the job, if there were any issues with agencies “President Wilson hammered them down.”<sup>46</sup> Davis was aware that he did not have the executive support that Creel enjoyed at the CPI and would later admit that Creel’s assessment was accurate. In addition, Congressional hostility from a partisan Republican Congress continued to reduce OWI appropriations. Davis, without presidential support, was left to defend OWI alone. By early 1944 the domestic budget of the OWI was on “life support.”<sup>47</sup>

Although faced with both internal and external pressures, the OWI was ultimately successful in its mission. Led by Davis, the OWI enjoyed a public/private partnership that future information efforts were unable to match. OWI recruited Hollywood actors and producers, private advertising and public relations companies, and enlisted Disney, Bugs Bunny, and Daffy Duck for the war effort.<sup>48</sup>

Overseas members of the OWI/FIS subordinated themselves to military operations in theater. General Eisenhower established a Psychological Warfare Division of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (*PWD/SHAEF*). PWD was an interagency, intergovernmental department consisting of American Soldiers, OWI personnel, British troops from the Political Warfare Branch (PWE), and Office of the Strategic Services (OSS). What started as a small detachment of fewer than 50 soldiers and civilians in 1942 grew to over 1,000 by the time of the Normandy invasion.<sup>49</sup> A legacy of the PWD was that it won a lifelong advocate and true believer of psychological warfare in General Eisenhower, who wrote that “Without doubt, psychological warfare has proved its right to a place of dignity in our military arsenal.”<sup>50</sup>



The OWI helped America defeat the Axis powers and used six clear, easily understood and repeated tenets to guide information operations:

1. A firm belief in the rightness of the cause;
2. An awareness of the difficulties of the struggle;
3. Confidence in ourselves and our leaders;
4. Confidence in our allies;
5. Resentment against the enemy for starting the war; and
6. Belief that military victory will lead to a better world.<sup>51</sup>

Although Elmer Davis did not enjoy the executive level partnership that George Creel valued, Davis did hold a cabinet level appointment and was involved, however cursorily, with U.S. strategic direction. His relationship with the executive, although frustrating, highlights the importance of having the executive engaged in supporting information operations. Elmer Davis represented another important lesson that modern government information operations should remember – the critical roles trusted civilian Americans bring to government information operations. It is doubtful that the OWI could have been successful without Elmer Davis at the helm where he personally alleviated American distrust of information coming from the government. The OWI reinforced the importance of public private partnership learned from the CPI, and redoubled the efforts to ensure the success of domestic and international strategic communication. The OWI was never truly integrated and synchronized with other governmental agencies. However, the OWI did possess a charter that delineated its mission and objectives and had the organization and leadership to understand that the final goal was the defeat of the Axis powers and the maintenance of domestic will.<sup>52</sup>

Internationally the OWI had amazing success breaking new ground with the Voice of America and synchronizing operations with theater commands to create true

unity of effort. With the end of the war and the defeat of axis totalitarianism, the United States abolished the OWI by Executive Order in 1945.<sup>53</sup>

### United States Information Agency

The birth of the USIA is eerily familiar to current attempts to solidify information operations and organizations at the national level. As Soviet aggression began to increase the administration experimented with a number of information organizations under Department of State control. In 1946 the International Information Service (IIS) became the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (OIC). In 1947 the OIC was renamed as the Office of International Information and Cultural Exchange (OIE). George Allen, the Undersecretary of State for Public Affairs, split the OIE into the Office of International Educational Exchange Program (USIE) responsible for cultural and public diplomacy, and the Office of International Information (OII), responsible for media such as Voice of America.<sup>54</sup> In April 1950 the OII geared up for what President Truman called the “Campaign of Truth,” a “sustained, intensified program to promote the cause of freedom against the propaganda of slavery” and fired America’s first salvo in the war of ideas against Soviet ideology.<sup>55</sup> The final manipulation occurred in 1952 when the State Department consolidated information operations into the International Information Agency (IIA).<sup>56</sup>

Upon taking office President Eisenhower concluded that U.S. information strategy was ineffective. President Eisenhower consolidated President Truman’s efforts at information operations by making an autonomous information agency out of the IIA. According to Osgood, Eisenhower believed that information strategy must have a close relationship between international public opinion, persuasion, and national security

policy. As a result, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was born on 1 August 1953.<sup>57</sup>

The USIA mission was to “understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad.”<sup>58</sup> USIA was designed to execute public diplomacy and information operations around the world. With the advent of USIA, the U.S. formally recognized the importance of information as an equal instrument of national power providing both cabinet level authority and the budget to support operations.

For over forty years USIA exported American culture and ideas through educational exchanges, informational programs like the voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Free America, Radio Free Asia, and hundreds of other programs. Theodore Streibert, the first leader of USIA, established the precedent of a bottom up organization where initiatives came from country teams in the form of country plans created with close collaboration between USIA personnel, ambassadors, and embassy staffs. USIA offices in Washington became in essence resource providers to ensure country teams had the means necessary to succeed. Although Streibert’s “field first” vision did not preclude top down programs, his leadership ensured all personnel knew that success of country teams was USIA’s first priority.<sup>59</sup> Success depended on strong relations between State Department and USIA officials in country teams across the globe, although these relationships ebbed and flowed over time as personnel changed. What USIA did provide were trained public diplomacy and information professionals

around the world, guided by a communication strategy that allowed ambassadors and country teams to focus on traditional state-to-state diplomacy.

As an operational agency, USIA's importance and effectiveness changed as a result of Presidential leadership, strategic guidance, and Congressional approval. Presidents such as Kennedy and Reagan relied heavily on the head of the USIA to advise and assist policymaking, others like Johnson and Carter did not. In either case the power and influence of the USIA, from inception to finish, was tied directly to the man occupying the White House and the abilities of the person leading the USIA.

A reoccurring theme for successful information operations is the importance of selecting a recognized and trusted individual to run the organization. Kennedy's brilliant appointment of Edward R. Murrow to run USIA gained the agency immediate respect from the American public. A New York Times reporter stated about his selection:

Edward R. Murrow, the best left-handed putter in Christendom and the most influential reporter of his time, has been given the job the fixing this country's overseas propaganda. Considering the fix he is in this is quite a job, for no country had a better story to tell, or failed so lamentably to tell it well as United States since the end of the war... No doubt, that Murrow has the qualities to do the job. He has the policy of the nation in his bones. He has the respect of reporters and all media here and abroad. He has style and ideas, and if he can hold his temper on Capitol Hill, which won't be easy, he may prove to be the best of Kennedy's excellent appointments.<sup>60</sup>

According to Wilson Dizard, it is not a coincidence that the pinnacles of USIA operations were tied to its leaders. The foremost of these were Edward R. Murrow and twenty years later under president Reagan, Charles Wick.<sup>61</sup> Both men became trusted advisors to the Chief Executive and gave strategic communication a voice in national policy.

By 1991 the USIA had played its part in the defeat of Soviet ideology.

During the 1990s Congress debated the relevancy of USIA and finally passed the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 driven by Sen. Jesse Helms chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.<sup>62</sup> The bill transferred USIA functions to the State Department, with the exception of broadcasting and commercial media functions such as Voice of America that was subordinated under the new Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) organization.<sup>63</sup> The change became effective on 1 October 1999 and was seen as part of the Cold War peace dividend. Less than two years later the United States was under attack by a new ideology and would face this threat without the mature strategic communication infrastructure and professional knowledge that had developed in the USIA over the past 45 years.

#### Strategic Planning and the Information Instrument of Power

To understand current issues with strategic communication and the Information instrument of power, it is necessary to explore the history of American national and grand strategy formulation. The struggle to integrate and synchronize the national instruments of power into clear policy and executable national strategy is not new. Post World War II examination of national strategy found widespread dysfunction and the inability to synchronize and integrate the DIME. Frictions and stovepipes between War and State Departments and inter-service rivalries between Army and Navy prevented a true unity of effort, and information, as a critical instrument of power was not addressed.<sup>64</sup> The National Security Act of 1947 was the first step in creating a unified staff at the national level to synchronize the DIME, and to “advise the President with respect to the integration of policies.”<sup>65</sup>

The planning and publication of NSC 68 in response to Soviet expansion was a key document that guided U.S. efforts during the Cold War. Facing a new existential

threat and armed with the lessons of the World Wars, the United States began to mobilize for another war of ideology, this time against Soviet Russia. The first step was mental and consisted of the expansion of the term psychological warfare to encompass any actions taken to influence public opinion or to advance foreign policy objectives by nonmilitary means. According to Kenneth Osgood, “psychological warfare became, in essence, a synonym for Cold War. It reflected the belief of many politicians and foreign-policy analysts that the Cold War was a political, ideological, psychological, and cultural contest as well as military and economic one.”<sup>66</sup>

President Truman developed America’s first attempt at unified strategic planning when he commissioned the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB). The PSB was a planning board under the National Security Council (NSC) that developed and implemented psychological strategy at the national level. The Schmidt-Mundt act of 1948 gave the authority to the U.S. government to execute hundreds of programs to influence the USSR including Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe (RFE).<sup>67</sup> The PSP was an effort to synchronize ongoing psychological operations conducted through the State Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).<sup>68</sup> The PSP consisted of members of the Joint Chiefs, Department of Defense, Department of State, and CIA. Gordon Gray, the first director, described the PSP charter as:

A cover name to describe those activities of the US in peace and war through which all elements of national power were systematically brought to bear on other nations for the attainment of US policy objectives... The purpose of the PSP was not to act as a planning group with respect to any one major effect, but to act as planner with respect to all.<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, the PSP suffered from lack of executive support and without President Truman’s direct intervention, intergovernmental agencies, especially the State

Department failed to execute any PSP strategy directives. Ultimately this lack of Presidential support led to a purely bureaucratic planning cell that produced, “reams of studies but failed to marshal national security bureaucracy behind a coordinated element.”<sup>70</sup>

According to Fred I. Greenstein and Richard H. Immerman, President Dwight D. Eisenhower set the standard for strategic planning and execution at the executive level.<sup>71</sup> President Eisenhower was a soldier and as a soldier understood the importance of morale. Public opinion was not something to be followed as a politician would. Morale (public opinion) was to be nurtured, reinforced, and strengthened and from Eisenhower’s perspective this was commander’s business and now President’s business. By 1952 Eisenhower had broadened his understanding and support for psychological warfare from his experiences with his Psychological Warfare Division during World War II. With regards to psychological warfare, he stated in a 1952 speech “don’t be afraid of the term just because it is a five dollar, five syllable word... Psychological warfare is the struggle for the minds and wills of men.”<sup>72</sup>

Eisenhower believed in the power of persuasion in his formula for national security: “spiritual force, multiplied by economic force, multiplied by military force, is roughly equal to security.”<sup>73</sup> Immediately upon taking office he commissioned the “Jackson Committee” to assess current U.S. psychological operations. Led by C.D. Jackson, a member of Eisenhower’s WWII PWD, and trusted advisor, the “Jackson Committee” made many recommendations for changes including the inception of the Operations Coordination Board (OCB).<sup>74</sup> The OCB was designed to replace the PSP, and its mission was to “get the psychological factor injected into all operations.”<sup>75</sup>

Eisenhower saw the OCB as a strategic planning organization and made it subordinate to the National Security Council. Before the advent of the OCB, NSC policy was too broad in general to guide operations. The OCB translated broad policy into detailed plans of action to implement the grand strategy formulated by the NSC.

The OCB created strategic plans that resembled military operations orders tasking government agencies and departments with specific actions to be executed. The OCB was an attempt to conduct grand strategy planning and execution at the national level. Although the OCB never fully met Eisenhower's expectations, he was personally invested in the process and presided over NSC meetings to hear debate on current policy issues and give directions and guidance. In the eight years Eisenhower held office, the NSC met 366 times and Eisenhower personally led 329 of the meetings.<sup>76</sup> Eisenhower talked about the importance of the NSC meetings when he stated,

I have been forced to make decisions, many of them of a critical character, for a good many years, and I know of only one way in which you can be sure you have done your best to make a wise decision. That is to get all of the [responsible policy makers] with their different viewpoints in front of you, and listen to them debate. I do not believe in bringing them in one at a time, and therefore being more impressed by the most recent one you hear than the earlier ones. You must get courageous men of strong views, and let them debate and argue with each other. You listen, and see if there's anything been brought up, any idea, that changes your own view, or enriches your view or adds to it. Then you start studying. Sometimes the case becomes so simple that you can make a decision right then. Or you might wait if time is not of the essence. But you make it.<sup>77</sup>

The OCB came under fire from many State Department personnel, including George Kennan, for being an overly bureaucratic and militarized organization. However, many believe that the NSC in conjunction with the OCB brought planning, method, and structure to national strategy formulation and ensured that the President was both



informed and engaged about current issues. The OCB lasted until the newly elected President Kennedy abolished it in 1961.

It can be argued that Eisenhower's NSC and supporting OCB was the last time the executive branch executed grand strategy formulation and that future strategic shocks could have been avoided if President Kennedy continued to build on the OCB foundation.<sup>78</sup> According to Jack A. LeCuyer in "A National Security Staff For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century," the current National Security Council and supporting National Security Staff (NSS) are unable to develop a whole of government approach to grand strategy.<sup>79</sup> Without an organization at the NSC that is capable of synchronizing national instruments of power, national strategy becomes regional strategy as each country team and GCC develop their own plans to fill the vacuum. It is no wonder that the Information instrument, without a current national stakeholder, lacks a focused guiding strategy. As LeCuyer states, the U.S. deserves a "forward-looking, functional, executive-legislative, strategic partnership that will guarantee our nations security and well being far into the future."<sup>80</sup>

#### Current Organization and Policy

The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 abolished the U.S. Information Agency effective on October 1, 1999. The USIA bureaus were folded into the State Department under the newly created Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Broadcasting functions like Voice of America were established under a newly created Broadcasting Board of Governors.<sup>81</sup> Although all government agencies play a part in strategic communication the primary stakeholders according to the 2009 Framework for Strategic Communication include the National Security Staff, Department of State, Department of Defense, Broadcasting Board of Governors, United States

Agency for International Development, the Intelligence Community, National Counterterrorism Center, and other departments and agencies as necessary.<sup>82</sup>

The National Security Staff (NSS) is responsible for synchronizing national policy and national or grand strategy. To assist the strategic communication effort the NSC includes a Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications (DNSA/SC) and a Senior Director for Global Engagement (SDGE) who is the principle deputy to the DNSA/SC, according to the framework:

Together, they are responsible for ensuring that (a) the message value in communicative impact of actions are considered during decision-making by the national Security Council and Homeland Security Council, (b) the mechanisms to promote strategic communications are placed within the National Security Staff (NSS), and (c) similar mechanisms are developed across the interagency. The DNSA/SC and SDGE are also responsible for guiding and coordinating interagency deliberate communication and engagement efforts, and execute this responsibility through the NSS Directorate for Global Engagement (NSS/GE) and through the Interagency Policy Committee (IPC's) on Strategic Communication which they chair.<sup>83</sup>

For strategic communication the Department of Defense has three major actors, the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)), the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ASD/(PA)), and the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I)). In 2011 DOD moved responsibility for IO oversight from USD(I) to USD(P) to streamline DOD procedures and create a single proponent for IO oversight and budget. Regionally each Geographic Combat Command has Military Information Support Operations (MISO) elements that support State Department and country team public diplomacy usually through Military Information Support Teams (MIST).<sup>84</sup>

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) has responsibility for all nonmilitary, international broadcasting sponsored by the U.S. government. This includes the Voice

of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), Radio and TV Marti, and Middle East broadcasting networks. BBG is an independent agency of the government and its mission is to “To inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.”<sup>85</sup>

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides U.S. foreign development assistance from the American People.<sup>86</sup> From disaster relief, agricultural and economic assistance to health issues, USAID is the “face” of public diplomacy to many foreign nations.

The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) coordinates, integrates, and synchronizes United States Governments efforts to counter violent extremism and deny terrorists the next generation of recruits. Its stated mission is to “lead our nation's effort to combat terrorism at home and abroad by analyzing the threat, sharing that information with our partners, and integrating all instruments of national power to ensure unity of effort.”<sup>87</sup>

In 2011 the State Department established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication (GSCC) that is an interagency organization under the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. The GSCC mandate is to “coordinate and inform Government-wide public communications activities directed at audiences abroad and targeted against violent extremists and terrorist organizations, especially Al Qaida and its affiliates and adherents, with the goal of using communication tools to reduce radicalization by terrorists and extremist violence and terrorism that threaten the interests and national security of the united States.”<sup>88</sup>

According to the 2009 framework, these separate entities work in conjunction and coordination to achieve national strategic objectives, and have been working together since the reorganization in 1999 to reenergize American public diplomacy and strategic communication. Unfortunately subsequent to 9/11 there has been a steady (and overwhelming) number of studies, white papers, and articles bemoaning the lack of effectiveness in U.S. strategic communication.<sup>89</sup> These failures run from the identification of a lack of organization and strategy to the methods used to communicate messages. Bottom line, U.S. strategic communication, since the USIA merged with State Department is not working.

In “Whither Strategic Communications,” Christopher Paul notes that recent studies have proposed wide-ranging recommendations for changes to the national strategic communication structure and policy. These recommendations include over 26 changes that range from the importance of leadership, review and clarity of national strategy, to the assessment of international broadcasting.<sup>90</sup>

Besides strategy and organizational issues, hundreds of books have been published on the ways and methods to achieve better influence across the globe using modern communication techniques and methods. According to Professor Steven Corman, the strategic communication community has failed to implement modern communication techniques and continues to rely on outdated repetitive based messaging instead of adjusting to a system that is always audience based, culturally dependent, and meaning centered.<sup>91</sup> The U.S. is at the center of communication theory and doctrine for the world, yet it continually fails to communicate.

Internally the State Department has recognized the need for public diplomacy strategy, and in the first ever Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review (QDDR) State makes “public diplomacy a core diplomatic mission by building regional media hubs staffed by skilled communicators to ensure that we can participate in public debates anywhere and anytime; pioneering community diplomacy to build networks that share our interests; and expanding people-to-people relationships.”<sup>92</sup> However, since the publication of the QDDR current debate continues to criticize U.S. public diplomacy and strategic communication efforts.

Following the amalgamation of USIA into the State Department, strategic communication has suffered from a series of missteps. The first, according to Matt Armstrong, is cultural as the State Department, more comfortable with traditional diplomacy than public diplomacy has given strategic communication “lip service” and the statistics support that premise.<sup>93</sup> Since the State Department took the lead in public diplomacy the position of Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy has been vacant more than 1,375 days.<sup>94</sup>

At the national level the National Security Strategy (NSS) outlines broad U.S. policy objectives and mentions the importance of strategic communication. “Our intelligence and homeland security efforts must be integrated with our national security policies, and those of our allies and partners. And our ability to synchronize our actions while communicating effectively with foreign publics must be enhanced to sustain global support.”<sup>95</sup> The NSS states, “Across all of our efforts, effective strategic communications are essential to sustaining global legitimacy and supporting our policy aims. Aligning our actions with our words is a shared responsibility that must be fostered by a culture of

communication throughout government.”<sup>96</sup> Although the NSS gives clear guidance, observers and critics of the current national strategic communication organization continue to point out America is failing in the struggle for ideas.

When comparing current strategic communication efforts to past information experiments current difficulties become apparent. Successful past SC endeavors have factors that are similar across the ages and by observing figure 1 it is evident that they are lacking in the current SC structure.

	National Threat	Clear Obj/Ends	SC Strategy or Charter	Engaged Executive	Known Cabinet level IO Advisor	National Confidence
CPI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
OWI	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
USIA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Varied	Varied	Varied
Current SC	Not clear	No	No	Not clear	No	No

Figure 1: SC Element Comparison

First is the perception of facing a national threat. The recognition and confidence needed to face an existential threat gives the government, especially the President, the ability to focus the population on a common goal. All successful prior efforts were tied to existential threats and the mobilization or partial mobilization of the American people. Although many scholars believe AQAM is only a symptom of a wider disease, that of radical Salafi jihadist ideology, the U.S. has vigorously attacked the first while largely

ignoring the wellspring that nurtures and feeds it. It is unlikely the U.S. will have success in a “war of ideology” if it lacks the will to identify the adversary. In conjunction with identifying the adversary is the need to identify potential allies and partners. Radical Salafi jihadist ideology is on the fringe of Islam and according to Robert Satloff there are millions of secular and moderate Muslims that want and need American support.<sup>97</sup> America has a long and distinguished history of defending and assisting Muslim countries from tsunami and earthquake relief in Indonesia to liberating Kuwait and protecting Muslim interests in the Balkans. The U.S. is not at war with Islam only the wellspring that feeds AQAM.

The second required element is a strategic objective. The U.S. current strategic communication framework directs the U.S. to synchronize words and deeds, yet that leads to the next question, to what ends? Grand national strategy encapsulated in NSC 68 guided government action during the Cold War. It is time for a modern NSC 68 that recognizes and confronts radical Salafi jihadist ideology. What are the U.S. ends in regard to radical Salafi ideology? Is the national end to co-exist, change, contain, restrain, neutralize, defeat, or remain ambiguous about violent extremist ideology? Understanding the sensitivity of overtly challenging an ideological threat tied to Islam, an ambiguous public strategy coupled with a modern NSC 68 of defeat or contain could re-direct current strategic direction and begin the discourse that is needed to influence and change minds. Without recognition of a clear strategic end regarding radical Salafi jihadist ideology U.S. efforts in this arena will continue to be unfocused and unproductive. The debate cannot commence until the U.S. decides to enter the stage.

A strategic communication strategy or charter that governs national strategic communication efforts is a third element. The Operations Coordination Board under Eisenhower was a genuine attempt at synchronizing and operationalizing national instruments of power across government agencies. As the OCB only lasted eight years, the USIA (and CPI and OWI) had an executive charter that described mission parameters and had the organization, staff, and leadership to plan and execute information operations when national strategy or guidance was unclear or lacking. The current national strategic communication framework has no charter and as such, each department or agency is entrusted to execute their own strategic communication governed by a series of committees and workgroups that hold no formal authority to direct intergovernmental agencies. To complicate matters although the State Department is the current “lead” for public diplomacy and telling America’s story, it has no authority over other governmental organizations to effectively integrate or synchronize information. In 2010 the State Department published “Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World: A Strategic Approach for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” This document met with wide and scathing criticism, as noted by Philip Seib, “It is so lacking in imagination, so narrow in its scope, and so insufficient in its appraisal of the tasks facing U.S. public diplomats that it is impossible to understand why its preparation took so many months.”<sup>98</sup>

Additionally, products produced by Interagency Policy Coordination Committees (IPC) such as the 2007 “U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication” typify current struggles of national communication. The interagency IPC and supporting workgroups, filled with committed and intelligent members,



designed and published a document that has no operational authority over government agencies. In short the IPC (then called Policy Coordination Committee – PCC) developed a strategic communication guidebook that has no power to direct execution or agency compliance. This strategy by workgroup has been done before and is analogous to the issues with the Psychological Strategy Board during the Truman administration. The DOD has attempted to fill the vacuum created by the lack of a national communication strategy. The DOD executes military support to public diplomacy in conjunction with State efforts throughout the Geographic Combatant Commands. These activities in support of the State Department are guided by the “whole of government” approach and the GCC commander’s recognition of filling a strategic need in his area of operations. While highly trained and motivated military MISO officers execute these efforts in support of country teams around the world, the necessities of these operations are indicative of the current gap in State Department public diplomacy and strategic communication strategy and resources.

The fourth element is the importance of an executive that is engaged in the strategic process. The President is the ultimate strategic communicator and should be intimately involved with communication policy and strategy decisions. The power of President Wilson’s “fourteen points”, Roosevelt’s “four freedoms”, Reagan’s “shining city on a hill” were powerful messages that impacted both domestic and international audiences. Besides the bully pulpit, the President’s leadership ensures department cooperation and interagency effectiveness across government. The President is the ultimate voice of America and has the responsibility to ensure other agency voices support his. In the absence of a cabinet level “Information” officer or agency, the

President, with support of the NSC and NSS, must be engaged in “hammering down the agencies” when needed. History is clear on this subject, without strong executive and congressional leadership holding agencies accountable, national information operations will succumb to bureaucratic inertia and fail.

Fifth is a cabinet level communication advisor that is a trusted member of the President’s inner circle and can assist in communicating America’s message to internal and external audiences. This advisor should not be a nameless bureaucrat or politician but a widely recognized and if possible celebrated member of the American media (or celebrity) to assist in telling America’s story. In the past, Elmer Davis and Edwin R. Morrow greatly contributed to America’s information struggles by bringing credibility to international audiences and garnering trust domestically. As modern media continues to explode, it is time to harness its energy. What effect would Oprah Winfrey, Tom Brokaw, or Katie Couric (perhaps Bill O’Reilly) have on international and domestic audiences as President Obama’s information or communication advisor? It is time to find out.

Our National Strategic Communication structure and lack of clear policy and strategy is not aligned to win the “war of ideas.” After almost twelve years of conflict the U.S. has fought only one head of a two-headed hydra. There is a fight for the future of Islam that will not be won by bombs and bullets although it will take courage and confidence. Millions of secular and moderate Muslims are engaged in this fight, and if radical Salafi jihadist ideology is to be believed, it is a battle for the future of Islam as well as western civilization. These moderate and secular Muslims are U.S. allies and need to be identified, encouraged, and reinforced.

## Recommendations

This paper has identified six elements that are required for successful national strategic communication. In addition the following recommendations are put forward.

1. For the uninitiated (as I was before writing this paper), the term “strategic communication” is a highly frustrating and elusive term that has created more confusion than it has alleviated. Author Christopher Paul lists twenty separate definitions of the term in his book “Strategic Communication” and there is still no consensus on the true meaning.<sup>99</sup> Dr. George Little, the current ASD/PA, recognized this issue and changed the term to “communication synchronization” inside DOD. The United States “communicates” and this communication should be guided by a “strategy” to achieve a strategic end—it is not an end in itself as the term “strategic communication” connotes. The paper recommends that the U.S. adopt the term “communication synchronization” or “communication strategy” to replace the term “strategic communication.” This simple act would focus the community on the strategy, rather than the communication part of the term. The vision calls for the development of a “communication strategy,” which is in turn supported by agencies executing “communication synchronization” in support of clearly stated (and achievable) national ends.

2. With hindsight, it is easy to conclude that dismantling USIA was a strategic blunder. USIA served as the stakeholder for the national Information instrument of power and developed experienced practitioners in communication, public, and cultural diplomacy, all of which are desperately needed now. Given the current economic and fiscal atmosphere, it may be infeasible to either develop a new agency or reconstitute USIA. John Lenczowski, in his superb book “Full Spectrum Diplomacy and Grand Strategy,” provides a number of thought-provoking recommendations to fix public

diplomacy and get America back into the global struggle for ideas. Although he recommends developing a new agency for influence and public diplomacy, his concept of developing an “influence culture” and what he calls “full spectrum diplomats” in the State Department is a cost effective “way” to get back in the idea arena.<sup>100</sup> This paper recommends that the Department of State, with executive and legislative support, redouble the ongoing efforts to create full spectrum diplomats that speak the language of cultural and public diplomacy as well as traditional diplomatic communication. Full spectrum diplomats that can engage publics and religions in inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue are desperately needed to combat radical Salafi jihadist ideology. The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy is a critical component in this endeavor, as it’s members are charged by law to “appraise United States Government activities intended to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics.”<sup>101</sup> Defunded in 2011, the commission was reborn as a part the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act. This Commission must be proactive in lobbying Congress and supporting DOS efforts to increase public diplomacy resources, training, and education.

3. A key element to success will be the designation of a cabinet level advisor for information, communication, and public diplomacy. An advisor is an easy and cost effective step in the right direction to get America back into the influence business at the national level. The advisor should be well known and trusted by the President, the Congress, the American people, and the international community. This person would reinforce DOS public diplomacy efforts worldwide, as well as assist the President in domestic communication. As domestic trust in government and politicians continues to drop, this position could help with popular perception. The cabinet level position should

not need a large staff and would serve at the pleasure of the President. Personnel recommendations include Oprah Winfrey, Brian Williams, Katie Couric, Tom Brockaw, Joe Scarborough, Bill O'Reilly, or former leaders such as President Bill Clinton. It is time to recruit a modern Edwin R. Murrow that can assist the President, help in rebuilding national trust, while capitalizing on the power of popular culture and celebrity.

4. Americans continue to be frighteningly disconnected from international events. With the advent of social media, every American now has the ability to be a public diplomat. Recent events demonstrate the power of these new "public diplomats" as violent extremists capitalize on relatively obscure You Tube videos to promote their narrative and incite violence. The restrictions of the Smith-Mundt Act prevent the government from effectively informing and educating the American people. Matt Armstrong and other public diplomacy professionals are attempting to gain political support to modernize the act that will effectively dismantle this information firewall.<sup>102</sup> This modernization effort requires support from both inside and outside government agencies (especially the Advisory Board) as a crucial first step in educating America's 300 million future public diplomats.<sup>103</sup>

5. This paper recommends that the U.S. reconstitute national and cultural confidence and unity in thought, word, and deed. Victory and defeat is ultimately psychological. Simply put, Americans must believe their culture and values are superior to those held by violent extremists. This is not an arena for a relativist. If America cannot generate the will, courage, and belief in American values such as liberty and individual freedom then logically the fight is already over. Because the U.S. is either unable or unwilling to debate with forces of radical Islam in the public square it forfeits the

ideological high ground while demonstrating domestically that the U.S. lacks the will and confidence to confront opposing views.

Ultimately the best way to change an idea is to have a better idea. The U.S. needs to regain its cultural confidence and belief that it has the better idea. The time for talk is over – it has been over eleven years since 9/11. During the Benghazi hearings in January 2013, Hillary Clinton – the officer in charge of telling America’s story to the world – admitted failure:

We have to do a better job conveying a counter narrative to the extremist jihadist narrative, you know, I have said this to the committee before, we have abdicated the broadcasting arena.... we are not doing what we were doing during the cold war...we are abdicating the ideological arena and we need to get back into it...we are letting the Jihadist narrative fill a void and we need to get back into it and compete.<sup>104</sup>

Current issues with strategic communication are not a matter of method or new ideas. Curiously the U.S. finds itself in almost the same position as during the dawn of the Cold War. Involved in a desperate struggle for the hearts and minds of men and recognizing that the nation lacked the means to fight it, Americans were still confident in their ability to win it. The means shortly followed and USIA, executing American public diplomacy and strategic communication, spread the ideas and values of America across the globe and assisted in the defeat of Soviet ideology. The solutions to current strategic communication issues are out there ready to be implemented. One would be hard pressed to find an innovative “new” way to communicate with a chosen audience. The answers are found in the recommendations of a plethora of official reports and studies, as well as hundreds of articles and books bemoaning the current state of American strategic communication. Ultimately, the U.S. issue with strategic communication has nothing to do with organization. The true problem is one of

leadership, sense of urgency, national unity, indomitable will, courage of conviction, and national confidence.

## Endnotes

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